


# Are You Living With a Psychopath?

A man and a woman are shown from the back, embracing each other. The man is on the left, wearing a brown blazer and blue jeans. The woman is on the right, wearing a grey patterned sweater and blue jeans. They are standing against a plain white background.

Dr Vernon Coleman

# **Are You Living With A Psychopath?**

The 39 simple ways you can diagnose a psychopath.

Dr Vernon Coleman MB ChB DSc FRSA

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## **Dedication**

To Donna Antoinette: the gentlest, kindest person I know; a beautiful and delicate flower in a world of drought, storm and pestilence.



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## Foreword

The terms ‘psychopath’ and ‘sociopath’ are, for all practical purposes, interchangeable. Journalists and commentators sometimes prefer to use the term ‘sociopath’ to describe people who have not committed violent acts, and to reserve the term ‘psychopath’ for those individuals who have committed serious crimes such as assault or murder. And academics will argue about the two words in ways which are of absolutely no practical relevance. In reality, however, there is no practical difference between the two: a sociopath is a psychopath and a psychopath is a sociopath.

However, even the term ‘sociopath’ has been deemed too insulting and it is now politically correct to describe psychopaths as ‘individuals with antisocial personalities’.

This new term was introduced because it was felt (largely by people who had never encountered psychopaths in their daily lives and who, therefore, had no idea of the amount of harm that they can do) that there was too much stigma associated with the word ‘psychopath’.

However, this rather mealy mouthed attempt to avoid the stigma associated to the word ‘psychopath’ does not change the reality, and whatever we call them (and in this book, I will continue to use the word psychopath), these individuals show an always callous and often dangerous disregard for the feelings and rights of others.

Relationships with psychopaths are built on deceit and dishonesty and these individuals, who are always selfish, irresponsible, impulsive, aggressive and sometimes physically dangerous, manipulate and exploit those whom they meet; sometimes they do this for material gain and sometimes they do it simply because they enjoy manipulating others and turning their lives into painful chaos.

I believe that instead of worrying about hurting the feelings of psychopaths, the medical profession should concentrate on trying to help those who come into contact with psychopaths and whose lives are, as a result, often devastated.

Indeed, since psychopaths do not have feelings to be hurt, it seems rather absurd to worry about offending them.

I also feel that the term ‘antisocial personality’ is actually misleading since it rather suggests that it is society which suffers from the behaviour of psychopaths whereas in reality, although psychopaths do cause enormous

harm to society as a whole, it is the individuals who come into contact with them who suffer most.

This short book is designed to help people recognise psychopaths when they meet them and it is my hope that the book will help readers protect themselves from hurt and injury.

It isn't difficult to identify psychopaths.

Psychopaths are exceptionally selfish, constant liars, manipulative, callous, grandiose and parasitic. They bully, they are never anxious, and they are invariably likeable. They seem strong, calm and confident but they lack personal insight. They never learn from experience and they never show remorse. In the past, there were thought to be more male than female psychopaths but this is probably now changing.

The problem today is that our society is well suited to psychopaths – who can, and often do, easily rise to the top in politics and business. Much of your life will inevitably be controlled by psychopaths – some of whom you don't know personally and some of whom you do. You can't do anything to affect the way the psychopaths you don't know affect your life but it will help if you know which of the people you do know are psychopaths. And that's the purpose of this short book.

Psychopaths are ruthless, manipulative and permanently dishonest; they show significant personality traits and markedly deviant social behaviour; they show no lack of restraint and are remorseless in their dealings with others; they never learn from experience and will do things which normal folk would regard as terribly simple to satisfy fairly insignificant desires. They will, without a qualm, ruin someone who has offended or inconvenienced them. Indeed, if the fancy takes them, they will ruin someone just for fun. Much of the most severe road rage is the work of psychopaths who feel that they have been (often mildly) inconvenienced by other motorists.

It is crucial that we all learn to recognise the psychopaths in our midst. They are increasing in number, power and influence. And today, more than ever, it is vital that we recognise them.

Identifying the psychopaths in your life can, quite literally, be a matter of life or death.

*Vernon Coleman*  
*England, Autumn 2015*





## **Introduction: Who are the psychopaths?**

We tend to think of psychopaths as being crazy, axe-swinging murderers. We imagine them to be hard eyed and easy to recognise as mad, bad and truly dangerous. Books and television programmes about psychopaths invariably concentrate on the mad, sadistic killers who have slaughtered and sometimes eaten their victims.

As a result, we assume that psychopaths are few and far between, and that most of them are probably safely locked up in penal institutions.

Unhappily, all that is absolute nonsense.

The fact is that most psychopaths are not murderers, they are not in prison and they are not recognised as posing a threat to the rest of us. They are a clear and present danger in our midst and there is no doubt that they do far more harm than terrorists, drunk drivers or ordinary common or garden criminals. Their actions cause untold pain and distress and the people who live with them, and work with them, frequently die prematurely from diseases caused or exacerbated by the stresses they create.

It is vitally important to understand that psychopaths don't all become serial killers, rapists, swindlers and confidence tricksters. They aren't all child abusers, gang leaders, cult organisers, mercenaries, drug barons, unscrupulous crooks or war criminals.

Many psychopaths become doctors, lawyers and politicians (especially politicians) and there are many psychopaths in charge of big companies and banks.

It is, indeed, the fact that there are many psychopaths in the boardrooms of banks and other major, international companies which explains why so many bankers and chief executives leave their companies in disarray, taking with them huge bonuses and pensions, but show absolutely no regret, no remorse and no sympathy for the people whose lives they have ruined.

We may have been encouraged, by popular culture, to think of psychopaths as being rare and easily identifiable individuals who spend their days rushing around cutting people up and eating their human livers, but this misconception has done enormous damage to us all because it has allowed the vast majority of psychopaths to operate unnoticed in our society.

Psychopaths are surprisingly numerous and the fact is that in some areas today as much as a fifth of the population are psychopaths.

This means that if you know just five people then the odds are that one of them will be a psychopath.

If you know 20 people then you may know, and have regular daily contact with, four psychopaths.

Moreover, the incidence of psychopathic traits in our society is increasing rapidly.

Just a few years ago, it was estimated that just one in every 100 people was a psychopath. Today that figure is much higher and it is believed that between 3% and 5% of people are psychopaths. The number of psychopaths living in fragmented families or slum areas of inner cities is likely to be even higher than this.

All this means that in any decent sized town or city there are likely to be 100,000 psychopaths. A large town of five million citizens is likely to contain one million psychopaths.

The average school or college or small business will have a number of psychopaths in the building.

In schools and colleges, many of the psychopaths will be teachers, lecturers, professors and deans.

And in businesses, the psychopaths won't be filing bits of paper or sweeping the floors. They will be sitting in the big offices; either in charge of everyone else, or planning on how best to get the big corner office for themselves.

It is important to remember too that psychopaths never change. They don't learn, they don't mature and they don't suddenly develop consciences as they grow older. The fact is that their brains are different to 'normal' brains.

Psychopaths may show signs of maturing as the years go by but this is not due to any inherent change in their physical or psychological constitution but is a result of the fact that they have learned to fake appropriate emotional responses more effectively.

Psychopaths, as they age, seem to be less of a threat but they are, in reality, more of a threat than ever because they have become more successful at doing all the things which help them to assimilate themselves into our world and to hide their true selves; the older psychopath is better at lying, better at convincing people that his intentions are good and that he is a trustworthy fellow, better at all the things which enable him to cheat, to defraud and to manipulate.

It is vital to remember that the vast majority of psychopaths appear entirely normal. Most of us know and work with psychopaths on a daily basis. We may not recognise them as psychopaths (and, since the vast majority of psychopaths have never been formally diagnosed, and one of the basic principles of the disease is an absence of insight, they themselves may not realise that they are truly different to the rest of us) but the chances are that if their lives and ours coincide in any way then the impact they have on us will be considerable.

Since the incidence of psychopathy is extraordinarily common, there is no doubt that many tens of millions of people are married to psychopaths or live with them in one way or another. Those people don't know it, of course, but their lives are undoubtedly being affected in many different ways.

To the psychopath, kindness, humanity and sentimentality are all signs of weakness, there to be exploited. Psychopaths do not have consciences, in the way that the rest of us do and so they never suffer from the restraining influence of guilt. Psychopaths do not experience real emotional ups and downs.

Occasionally, the impact of living with a psychopath can be dramatic. Some partners who live with psychopaths may notice something notably different about them (perhaps without quite realising what it is) but for most people, living with a psychopath may simply be an unpleasant, unhappy and increasingly uncomfortable experience.

In the early days, weeks and months the psychopathic partner will make a real effort, and will probably seem to be kind, attentive, thoughtful and courteous. Most psychopaths can play 'charming' very effectively.

But, as the weeks and months pass by, it will gradually become clear that things aren't quite as 'comfortable' as they may appear to be.

Psychopaths are cruel, self-serving and never take responsibility for the things they do. They never experience guilt and never show signs of remorse.

One way or another, relationships with psychopaths invariably end in pain.





## **How to tell if you are living with a psychopath**

Go through the following list of the traits associated with psychopaths and you will, I fear, probably be surprised to realise just how many people you know, and who may be close to you, match these signs and symptoms and can probably be identified as psychopaths.



## Chapter One

Psychopaths are exceptionally selfish and egocentric. Because they are not encumbered with consciences, and never worry about how their activities will affect others, psychopaths are extraordinarily selfish individuals. To a large extent, they are rather like lower animals who see the world only as it affects them. A rabbit will munch seedlings because it doesn't, for a second, worry that it is destroying growing plants. A fox will kill and eat the rabbit without a qualm. And, similarly, if a psychopath wants something he will take it. He will not for one second worry that the owner might feel sad at its loss. A psychopath doesn't worry about other people's feelings. He doesn't think twice about cheating other people if it is to his own advantage. (For the sake of simplicity and clarity I have used the words 'he', 'him' and 'his' throughout this book but it is important to remember that there are also many female psychopaths.)

Psychopaths are not mad in the same way that the average serial killer is mad.

They aren't driven by God to kill fallen women, like so many deranged killers. They don't hear voices telling them what to do.

When psychopaths kill, it is not because they are deranged; it is because they do not treat other human beings as thinking, feeling individuals, for they themselves are cold, calculating and selfishly rational. Psychopaths understand when they are behaving badly, and know when they are breaking the rules, but they don't see why they should stop themselves. They continue to behave badly because their behaviour is of enormous advantage to them personally.



## Chapter Two

Psychopaths lie constantly (and are extremely good at it).

Psychopaths lie far more than any normal person could believe possible and they do it very, very well. Most of us lie very little, and are not very good at it, and so if we are caught out in a lie we tend to admit our guilt if we are pressed. The psychopath, on the other hand, just keeps lying. And lying. And lying. Politicians in particular tell big, deliberate, determined, self-serving lies. They lie and we believe them because, as Hitler pointed out, we cannot truly believe that anyone would tell lies that big. And they know that if they just keep lying they will manage to fool most of the people most of the time. Especially if they do it with a smile and a few disarming words.

‘I’m a trustworthy sort of guy,’ always works well, when murmured softly with a smile and an air of surprise and disappointment that anyone could contemplate otherwise.

The odd thing is that all this lying means that psychopaths have excellent social skills. Because they lie far more than most people would think possible, and because they do it so well, they can be very convincing.

Of course, psychopaths will occasionally tell the truth if it is convenient for them to do so. But because of a fault in their brains they cannot distinguish between the truth and the lie, and cannot see any point in making the effort to do so. To them the only important thing is that their interests are well served. If telling the truth serves their interests then they will tell the truth. But if telling a lie serves their interests then they will tell a lie without any compunction, regret or shame.

Whereas most folk will feel shame, embarrassment or guilt about lying, the psychopath will feel none of those things.

There are lots of tell tale signs which ordinary people make when lying. They cover their mouths, they look away, they touch their noses or eyes, they blush, they play with their collars or with something around their necks, they will put a finger or a pencil into their mouths, they will look at the ceiling or the floor and they will often put far more emphasis on the veracity of their lie than it really needs.

But the psychopath does none of these things.

The psychopath can lie without a blink or a blush. There is no way to tell that a psychopath is lying. And he will keep on lying even when it is clear

that he is lying. He will keep on lying for so long, with such persistence and with such protestations of honesty and innocence, that his listeners will begin to doubt their own interpretation of the truth.

‘It would never come into average people’s heads to fabricate colossal untruths,’ wrote Adolf Hitler. ‘And they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously.’

In the end, the chances are good that the psychopath’s lies will be accepted as the truth for the psychopath knows from experience that if you lie often enough, and with enough persistence and determination, then the lie will eventually become the truth.

And for the psychopath, no lie is too big to contemplate or to stick with.

Individuals who are prepared to tell the big lie (in the knowledge that no one will suspect that it is a lie because it is simply too outrageous) always have a tremendous advantage over sensitive, caring, honest folk.

Most of us aren’t used to dealing with people who lie consistently and shamelessly, we don’t believe that anyone could possibly lie consistently and shamelessly and so we are easily conned.

Most of us have an unshakeable confidence in the goodness of man and so we are extremely gullible.

Incidentally, psychopaths have another advantage over the rest of us: if they are caught out in a lie or a fraud or some other sin, they are likely to get away with their crime simply by continuing to lie.

The politician who has started a war on a lie will simply keep lying. He (or she) knows that if you keep lying then the public will probably believe you. If you tell a lie often enough, and shout it loudly and with vigour (and a sense of ‘hurt’ that people don’t automatically believe you), most people will accept what you are saying and will eventually believe that the lie is the truth.

Most people simply don’t feel that comfortable about lying; and so they find it difficult to believe that anyone could lie consistently with such aplomb. Psychopaths are incredibly good liars. Just think of some of the politicians who have lied about significant issues – and remember the way they sustained their lies and expressed dismay at any suggestion that they might not be telling the truth.

Remember too, that lie detector machines don’t usually catch psychopaths. Psychopaths are too unemotional, and just too good at lying, to be caught out by a relatively crude machine which depends for its

accuracy upon heart rate, sweating and other simple physical signs of distress.

A fairly ordinary, common or garden, psychopath will be able to sail through a police grilling without a moment of discomfort.





## **Chapter Three**

Psychopaths are manipulative and skilled at persuading other people to do things for them.

Psychopaths get a great kick out of manipulating people – whether they are friends, colleagues or family members. They begin by manipulating people through charm and persuasion but if those methods fail then they will manipulate through fear. If they find themselves in a difficult position, they will rationalise and explain away their situation by claiming that they had no choice, but that they had to behave in the way they did. If that doesn't work, they will resort to violence. And, of course, they will always manipulate people in such a way as to ensure that any blame will fall on the person they have manipulated. The psychopath never takes responsibility for something bad that has happened; nothing is ever their fault.



## **Chapter Four**

Psychopaths are grandiose and full of self-importance.

The psychopath sees himself as the centre of the universe. No one else is as important. The psychopath never puts himself second. The psychopath may pretend to love others (and may indeed make a great fuss when faking protestations of love) but this will be done solely to further his own ends. The psychopath only ever loves himself. The psychopath will, over the years, learn that it is possible to get what he wants by pretending to be a good and loyal lover or friend. And so he will do everything he can to build up that image. He will tell anyone who will listen that he has been a good and loyal friend. He will do all the dutiful, expected things. When he sends cards to close family members or to a lover, he will put on lots of kisses and many proclamations of love. He does these things because he knows that they are the quickest and most effective way to get what he wants out of the other person. But however much he might pretend to be a loving spouse, parent or friend the psychopath's primary loyalty will never waiver. His first and only loyalty will be to himself. He thinks himself genuinely superior to everyone around him. In his mind, he is the only person who truly matters.



## **Chapter Five**

Psychopaths have a sense of entitlement and are often parasitic (willingly living off others).

Psychopaths will take everything they can, without ever feeling the need to return the favours they have grasped with such enthusiasm. In addition to leeching off friends and relatives, psychopaths will frequently take full advantage of the range of benefits provided by the State. Psychopaths will frequently choose to settle in a country which offers exceptionally generous support for the sick and needy and they will then make sure that they take full benefit of every piece of available support.



## **Chapter Six**

Psychopaths are callous and indifferent to suffering.

Psychopaths do not feel or show any empathy or genuine sympathy when others around them are suffering, though they will, of course, shed fake tears and show fake sympathy when these seem appropriate. As the years go by, psychopaths learn that they will benefit enormously if they are seen by those around them to be caring, thoughtful and considerate. And so they will do everything they can to appear to be caring, thoughtful and considerate.





## Chapter Seven

Psychopaths lack personal insight and never learn from experience. Psychopaths repeatedly make the same mistakes (or do the same bad things) because they never see themselves as having done wrong. Psychopaths (like others with personality disorders) are never aware that there is anything wrong with their thinking or their behaviour.

Most of us learn that we will be rewarded emotionally if we do something good. We will feel good about ourselves and, quite possibly and understandably, rather pleased with what we have done.

We also know, of course, that we will probably be punished in some way if we do something bad. We will feel guilty if we do something that we should not do. If we are unlucky and commit a motoring offence (or commit a burglary or a mugging and the police are unusually alert and the CCTV cameras are working) then we may even end up in court.

Psychopaths, however, never learn because they don't have the necessary parts in their brains to learn from their mistakes. They never feel guilty and they are never controlled by feelings of shame. If they have been punished by society in some way, then they will simply look for a way to avoid getting into trouble in the future. If they find themselves confronted by an outraged citizen, or a suspicious member of the constabulary, and there is no alternative way of avoiding an unpleasant encounter or, worse still, some form of unpleasant punishment, they will simply deal with the problem by disposing of their accuser in some permanent way that is unlikely to be traced back to them.

We all make mistakes. We all do foolish things. But most of us regret those mistakes. We try to change. We try to learn from our foolish behaviour. However, psychopaths aren't like normal people. Psychopaths never think they are wrong and they can never put themselves into the other person's shoes; they can never see a situation from someone else's perspective. Psychopaths always see every situation only from their own point of view. When their behaviour results in a serious argument, a confrontation or a disappointment, they blame the other person (or other people). If they have a disagreement at work then the problem is, in their mind, always due to someone else's behaviour. If they have an argument at home then the fault is always their partner's. In the end this sort of behavioural pattern leads, inevitably, to rancour and resentment.

All this means that attempts to punish psychopaths, or to persuade them to change their ways, are invariably a failure. Psychopaths do not modify their behaviour, or improve the way they treat others, when they are punished. Instead, they usually become increasingly bitter, angry and unsentimental about the world.



## **Chapter Eight**

Psychopaths are bullying and abusive.

Psychopaths bully and are abusive for two reasons. First, because they can be abusive without feeling guilty. Second, because they don't see any reason why they shouldn't be, especially since they know from experience that bullying is a very effective way to get their own way. If a psychopath doesn't think he is being treated with sufficient respect (if, in other words, he is not getting entirely his own way) then he is quite likely to become aggressive and physically threatening. If words don't get him what he wants then he will use his fists or a weapon.

Psychopaths occasionally get into trouble with the law because of their behaviour when they feel thwarted. But they often escape without punishment because they learn how to manipulate other people. They pretend to be apologetic, they promise 'not to do it again', they cry crocodile tears, they may talk of suicide (something they never do in reality) and they convince the court, the police and everyone around them that they are innocents who merely got caught up in an unfortunate situation.



## Chapter Nine

Psychopaths are good at tricking people.

Psychopaths trick the people they know and the people who trust them but they also make excellent confidence tricksters.

Most of us are constrained by our consciences. We feel guilty if we take advantage of other people's honesty and trust. We feel ashamed of ourselves if we take advantage of the weak, the gullible or the vulnerable.

Psychopaths suffer none of these constraints. Psychopaths will take bread from starving children without a qualm. A psychopath will cheat an old couple out of their savings without any sense of shame. He will regard the vulnerable and the slow-witted as easy marks. It is for this reason that psychopaths often become very successful (and make a lot of money) out of financial schemes which depend for their success on the ignorance and trust of others. A few decades ago, the most ambitious confidence tricksters were busy enrolling victims into pyramid selling schemes. Today, however, the most ambitious psychopaths have learned that there is much more money to be made out of working for investment banks or hedge funds where they can make huge fortunes by fiddling interest rates or commodity prices and stealing from millions of people at a time. The big advantage with frauds of this nature is that they invariably go unpunished. The fraud comes with an almost unlimited upside and almost no downside.

Of course, not all psychopaths use their peculiar psychological talents to enable them to make money through trickery or fraud.

But all will use their natural skills to enable them to manipulate those whom they meet in various walks of life. So, for example, parents who are psychopaths will manipulate school teachers (charming them, threatening them and bullying them) and all psychopaths will manipulate doctors and other health professionals.

I once met a woman who was a psychopath and a mother.

All three children had been diagnosed as being mentally ill because they had complained about their mother and the treatment they had received at her hands. She had beaten her children and treated them contemptibly; bringing them up in an atmosphere of undiluted fear.

In reality, there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the children. They were all close to nervous breakdowns but they were not mentally ill. It was the mother who was sick; she was a psychopath who had regularly

dismissed the children's fears and anxieties as nonsense and who had persuaded the authorities to treat her as the unfortunate victim. She convinced the authorities that her husband was a dangerous madman and that her children were deluded and suffering from paranoia. She was so convincing that her children were the ones who ended up receiving drug therapy.

In fact, of course, there was nothing wrong with her husband. He was a rather insipid fellow but he wasn't dangerous. And there was nothing wrong with any of her children except that they had been brought up in an atmosphere of fear. They were so terrified of their mother that they would do whatever she told them to do.

The only person in this bizarre household who was ill was the mother; and she was a full-blooded psychopath. She had manipulated her husband, terrified her children and charmed a number of doctors, psychiatrists and social workers so successfully that she lived in considerable luxury. All her children received weekly disability benefits and she controlled every penny that went into the house. She paid each child a small amount of weekly pocket money and kept the rest for herself. The end result was that she had total control of her household and a not inconsiderable income from the State. Her standard trick with health workers was to play the martyr. She deliberately wore scruffy and dowdy clothing. She walked with a stoop and made it abundantly clear that she was nothing but a loving mother, struggling to care for her sick brood and to deal with the poor hand of cards which she had been dealt.

It was only after I had talked at some length with her children, and had gained their confidence, that I was able to begin to see through the act the mother was putting on. She ruled the house with fear. On several occasions, the children showed me bruises that had resulted when their mother had attacked them. The children had often been admitted to a local hospital with broken bones. (The psychopathic mother always had a good explanation for these 'accidents', of course.) When I eventually confronted the woman with the truth, she forgot her downtrodden act and suddenly became aggressive, menacing and threatening. She would never admit that she was the one at fault.

Psychopaths are quick to take advantage of the vulnerable and the lonely and always do so without any sense of remorse. They are, however, also skilled at making themselves look like victims. A psychopath will smile and



take your pride, your money, your innocence, your love and your hopes and dreams and they will then flagrantly and casually violate all the social norms without being troubled by the slightest twinge of conscience.



## Chapter Ten

Psychopaths can be superficially charming.

Psychopaths are charming because they have learned to be attentive and to fake interest in others; but their interest is purely superficial and their eyes quickly glaze over when someone else is talking about themselves, and they change the subject as quickly as they can.

To the untrained eye and ear (and the individual who has not read this book), psychopaths usually seem likeable and very sane and will, indeed, usually show far fewer signs of mental illness than others around them. Psychopaths don't usually suffer from anxiety or depression and they don't have any difficulty in sleeping when things aren't going well for them.

I have met (and diagnosed) quite a few psychopaths in my professional career. A few I met when I was a general practitioner. And I met quite a number when I worked as a police surgeon. The one characteristic they all had was their charm. They could turn it on and off like a tap and they tended to turn it full on whenever they thought it might prove useful. I remember interviewing one murderer who had been arrested almost in flagrante. He was still covered in his victim's blood when the police caught him. The victim, an older man, was his lover. Realising that it was impossible for him to deny any involvement in the man's death he burst into tears and claimed that he had been merely defending himself. He claimed that he had been attacked and it was the murdered man who had been the instigator of the violence. It soon became clear that this story was absurd. The murdered man was frail, had a weak heart and suffered from terrible osteoarthritis. He needed a walking stick to move about and was nowhere near fit enough to have attacked the much younger, stronger man. The murdered man's body, when I examined it, was covered in bruises and scratches and it was clear that he had been the object of a good deal of physical abuse. It also became apparent that the older man had signed over much of his wealth and had recently arranged for his solicitor to put his home in the younger man's name. The solicitor reported that he had been concerned that the older man, his client, had been coerced into making the transfers. Even when confronted with all this evidence, however, the killer had steadfastly stuck to his story. He stuck to it in court and he stuck to it when he was found guilty.



## **Chapter Eleven**

Psychopaths invariably seem strong and confident; unless they are annoyed they usually remain calm when others around them are consumed with anxiety. Psychopaths hardly ever panic or lose their nerve. The complete absence of a conscience, or any sense of guilt, means that psychopaths are free of all normal constraints.



## **Chapter Twelve**

Psychopaths may appear sincere, and may be extremely convincing, but events usually show their sincerity to be false. They may say things like 'trust me' or 'I want to help you' or 'I'm a straightforward sort of person'.





## **Chapter Thirteen**

Psychopaths commonly become frustrated and angry, usually when they don't get their own way. Their anger and frustration will often turn to rage. It is crucial to remember that psychopaths think only of themselves and of what they want. And if their plans, hopes and aspirations appear to be thwarted, they will become enraged. For example, a psychopath will often become enraged if he is thwarted in traffic. Ordinary motorists who are offended by the behaviour of someone else on the road will probably do no more than wave two fingers, but the psychopath will chase after the offender (for miles if necessary) then attack him or her quite violently. The attack will often be quite out of proportion to the perceived offence.



## **Chapter Fourteen**

Psychopaths are never irrational (not, at least, in their own minds).

Psychopaths are unimaginative but they are logical. They are driven by very simple yearnings: they see themselves as individuals isolated in a curious, alien world. The psychopath's life does not leave room for irrational or pointless behaviour but is, generally speaking, directed quite rationally. He has clear and simple ambitions, and his life is organised in such a way as to best enable him to meet his targets. He does not see any point in behaviour designed solely for fun or entertainment. How could that possibly move him forward towards his goals?

There are, however, some basic exceptions to this rule. If the psychopath sees some potential benefit in behaving in a way which he finds irrational but which will, nevertheless, take him forwards in his quest then he will behave irrationally. So, if a psychopath wants to further a business relationship he will put up with the sort of social activity he loathes if he thinks it is likely to move his plan forward.



## Chapter Fifteen

Psychopaths tend to have poor imaginations and so make poor artists, writers or film makers. You might imagine that having little or no imagination would be a disadvantage for a criminal. If caught in a tricky spot, a criminal would probably find it useful to be able to think creatively, and to devise a way through or around their problem. But psychopaths don't need to do this. They can avoid or escape from their problems by lying, by using their charm, by persuading other people to help them or, in extremis, by simply battering their way out of difficulty (and, like Patricia Highsmith's character Tom Ripley, by killing whichever individuals have become inconvenient, troublesome or threatening.)

Surprisingly, perhaps, although they have poor imaginations, their vanity and sense of self-importance mean that psychopaths are often found in positions of power in the media (where they may become newspaper or magazine editors, television producers or executives and film producers and directors).



## Chapter Sixteen

Psychopaths don't worry in the way that most people worry; they don't suffer from anxiety in the normal way.

Most of us worry because we have imaginations. When something goes wrong, or something might go wrong, or we suspect that something might go wrong, or we simply begin to fear that we ought to be worrying about something going wrong, our minds create all sorts of unpleasant scenarios. We can see ourselves in court, vilified, ostracised, abandoned and bankrupt. Our error might be a small one. But we worry about the possible repercussions and our minds play strange games with us. The fears and the resultant anxieties will develop in direct proportion to our sensitivity and our ability to imagine the worst. If we are introspective individuals, with vivid imaginations, we will be able to create nightmare futures for ourselves.

And, of course, we worry if we do something wrong. We become consumed with guilt. We worry about the people we might have wronged. We worry about the consequences. Will people hate us? Will they take us to court? Will they tell everyone how awful we have been? Will they report us to the authorities? Will we lose our licence to do whatever it is we need a licence to do? Will we end up humiliated in the local newspaper? It is for all these reasons that many people who have done wrong end up confessing to their crimes. In the end the punishment they will receive will, they know, be nothing compared to the punishment they are meting out to themselves.

Psychopaths have none of these problems. They don't have consciences. They know no guilt. They genuinely know no fear. (And, incidentally, if anyone tells you that they know no fear and they mean it then they are almost certainly psychopaths.) And they believe they can lie and cheat their way out of any trouble they find themselves in.





## **Chapter Seventeen**

Psychopaths are often hostile, aggressive and violent. Because they are quick to become frustrated, psychopaths often become hostile, extremely aggressive and violent. They are sometimes guilty of what may appear to the rest of us to be random and senseless violence; they will hit out (and even kill people) without showing any remorse. But to the psychopath, the violence is never irrational or pointless. There is always a simple reason for what they do. The psychopath will attack, crush and even kill people who stand in their way, who threaten them in some way or who are merely proving to be inconvenient or embarrassing.

Until they learn how society works, psychopaths may not even realise that their behaviour will lead to trouble for themselves, and they certainly won't feel any remorse for what they have done. Older psychopaths, who have learned that society as a whole doesn't approve of violence, may be more cautious, or may take more care to ensure that they aren't caught. As they become older, the majority of psychopaths will learn to suppress their violent tendencies so that they do not attract attention to themselves and damage the lifestyle they are enjoying. But the threat of violence is always there. And, of course, even if the psychopath is caught red-handed he will always allege, with great conviction, that the victim was in some way the cause of the violence.

Finally, psychopaths are difficult to catch because they never shown any signs of guilt.



## **Chapter Eighteen**

Psychopaths are unable to experience love or show true compassion.

Psychopaths don't know what love is but, with experience, they do learn to fake these emotions very effectively. They will make declarations of love if they think they will benefit and they will weep what appear to be real tears if the occasion demands them. The older and more experienced a psychopath becomes the better able he will be at faking emotional responses.



## **Chapter Nineteen**

Psychopaths are uninterested in anyone else's tragedy or joy.

Psychopaths may fake interest in other people. But they have no genuine interest in someone else's good fortune or bad fortune.



## **Chapter Twenty**

Psychopaths will never take responsibility; they will always blame others when things go wrong.

Psychopaths are completely selfish; they never think of anyone but themselves. If they make a mistake, they will always point a finger at someone else – and blame them.





## **Chapter Twenty One**

Psychopaths never show remorse or guilt and do not ever care about the feelings of others; they never feel bad when they do bad things and they never feel ashamed. Their primary concern is that they do not get caught and find themselves forced to take responsibility for what they have done. And so, inevitably, the psychopath's first reaction will always be to blame someone else. If that fails then the psychopath will fake an emotional response; they will pretend to be deeply upset by what they have done. They will, of course, still blame the victim. Incidentally, most psychopaths do not think that they are in any way different to other people, and they certainly don't think of themselves as ill.



## **Chapter Twenty Two**

Psychopaths are exceptionally likely to become alcoholics or drug addicts. (And so, as a result, may have a shorter life expectancy than the general population). They are also likely to be promiscuous. And if they are unable to talk their way out of trouble they may end up in prison.



## **Chapter Twenty Three**

Psychopaths are indifferent to literature or art. They are unmoved, except in a very superficial way, by beauty, love, evil or horror. Psychopaths find it difficult to understand why other people become emotional when watching a six-tissue movie. But psychopaths will fake interest, and fake emotional responses, when they are older and more experienced.



## **Chapter Twenty Four**

Psychopaths have little or no genuine sense of humour (although they can, of course, fake a sense of humour just as they can fake other emotions). When psychopaths do find something funny it is usually something that may seem cruel or very simple to other observers. They will laugh at the misfortunes of strangers. They will not, however, laugh at subtle things. They do not have a 'sophisticated' sense of humour. And they won't make original and witty remarks themselves.

Despite the absence of a genuine sense of humour, psychopaths can sometimes appear witty and charming because they will remember jokes they've been told and repeat them at appropriate moments.





## **Chapter Twenty Five**

Psychopaths are chameleons. They will recreate themselves if they think it will be advantageous. And so they will, for example, create a new personality whenever they consider it necessary. In prison, psychopaths are incredibly good at convincing parole boards (and psychiatrists and prison visitors) that they feel truly sorry for any crimes they have committed, that they have changed and that all they need is a good hug and everything will be fine. Moors murderer Myra Hindley, for example, was exceedingly skilful at persuading prison visitors that she was a changed woman.



## Chapter Twenty Six

Psychopaths often behave in a way that leaves normal people feeling helpless, betrayed and bewildered.

The psychopath's behaviour is morally incomprehensible to the rest of us. A psychopath will kill a passer-by simply to steal their wallet. They will do this without a second thought, and without remorse, because to them the deed seems to be logical and justified. They needed money. There was money in a wallet. They took the wallet. And in taking the wallet they had to kill the owner. If they had not murdered then the owner of the wallet might have called the police. And that would doubtless have been inconvenient.

Most psychopaths don't go around killing strangers, of course. They don't behave violently because they don't need to. The more intelligent psychopaths manipulate and lie and use people in order to further their own ends, and they do this in far more subtle ways than by hitting them on the head with a brick or stabbing them in the back with a knife.

It is much easier (and safer) to trick people by being a charming liar than by hitting them on the head. Psychopaths can convince and deceive with a charm that can convince even the most experienced sceptic. And, of course, psychopaths are often manipulative enough to realise that it is sometimes best to tell the truth – simply because by salting the mine with a few nuggets of truth they can disarm those who are suspicious.



## **Chapter Twenty Seven**

Psychopaths, particularly young and inexperienced ones, tend to make too much effort to appear genuinely interested in other people. When meeting strangers they may use their hands a good deal more than other folk would. They are likely to be effusive and to overdo things in the manner of not terribly good thespians taking part in amateur dramatics for the first time.



## **Chapter Twenty Eight**

Psychopaths sometimes appear to have rather 'dead' eyes, and their stare may seem uncomfortably intense to others. Psychopaths look people in the eye because they believe that this makes them seem honest but also because they know it is a good way to obtain power over others.





## **Chapter Twenty Nine**

Psychopaths are good at pretending to be victims. Onlookers and observers often sympathise with the psychopath because they are taken in by the smile, the presence and, quite often, the psychopath's fake sense of grievance. It is not unusual for the psychopath's victim to end up feeling that they have done something wrong.



## **Chapter Thirty**

Psychopaths often make promises they know they cannot keep, and have no intention of keeping. They make the promises because they are convenient and useful and they enable them to get what they want, when they want it. Obligations and commitments mean nothing to psychopaths, and they feel no need to honour promises or principles unless there is some obvious benefit to themselves in doing so. They will remain unmoved by the knowledge that their actions are causing hardship and unhappiness for others. Psychopaths tend to leave everyone they meet sad but not much wiser.



## **Chapter Thirty One**

Psychopaths are good at self- promotion. They have enormous self- belief and confidence and sometimes appear exceptionally 'pushy'. Psychopaths can manipulate others calmly, coolly (and without any qualms) and they frequently do this in order to further their own careers. Since they never feel guilt or shame, psychopaths can frequently rise right to the top in their chosen field.



## **Chapter Thirty Two**

Psychopaths learn to fake their emotions by studying other people. As a result, it is sometimes clear that an individual appears to act and react in a way that is spookily reminiscent of the way someone else acts and reacts.





## **Chapter Thirty Three**

Psychopaths are often extremely ambitious. And they rise to the top because they can deal with problems, setbacks and disappointments far more effectively than ordinary folk. Bad things break the sensitive. (Nietzsche was quite wrong when he said that things that don't kill you will make you stronger. The things which hurt but don't kill still cause permanent damage.)

Psychopaths ignore or brush aside the sort of genuine worries that destroy ordinary people. It is the mental strength of psychopaths which helps them to rise to the top, and it is that strength, that unswerving, uncaring, committed determination to achieve their own ambitions, whatever the cost might be, that is such a danger both to vulnerable individuals and to society as a whole.



## **Chapter Thirty Four**

Psychopaths neglect their families in every conceivable way. The psychopath's only real concern is himself (or herself) and he or she has no real love or even affection for their spouse or children.



## **Chapter Thirty Five**

Psychopaths are constantly searching for excitement and may, therefore, engage in an unending series of casual sexual relationships. They do this not because they are looking for love or romance, or even physical excitement, but because they enjoy the thrill of the chase and the thrill of cheating on their partners without being found out.



## Chapter Thirty Six

Psychopaths never apologise. When ordinary folk make serious mistakes they apologise, try to put things right and, quite probably, feel full of guilt. Sensitive, caring individuals bend over backwards to make amends. But when psychopaths make mistakes they lie and lie and lie again. And they do it convincingly and without a blush. It never occurs to them to apologise. They don't make any effort to put things right. And, unless it is completely unavoidable, they do not resign. (When psychopaths do apologise it is because they are faking normal behaviour and because they think that an apology will prove beneficial; they see that there will be some personal advantage to be gained if they express regret.)

The psychopath's default position is to lie, and to blame someone else when things go wrong. Psychopaths are well suited to our world; in simplistic terms they are the 'fittest' and the toughest and so they survive. Psychopaths are manipulative and superficial and they lie and cheat with impunity; they are not held back by consciences. They never feel guilty. Why should they apologise?

The trait of guilt-free dishonesty, and the ability to move on without ever feeling any genuine need to apologise, is helpful in a number of trades and professions. It should be no surprise that psychopaths are commonly found leading political parties and large, international businesses. I've studied political parties around the world (I have written several political books on British, American and European politics) and have come to the conclusion that every major political leader on the planet (and every significant opposition leader) is a fully fledged, completely paid up psychopath.

And so the world, which is now run by psychopaths, according to their own lack of principles, becomes nastier and nastier, and the sensitive, the meek and the mild are trodden on and crushed.





## **Chapter Thirty Seven**

Psychopaths are quick thinking; they are capable of thinking on their feet and, if cornered, will quickly make up effective and often believable lies in order to explain their behaviour. It is their ability to lie quickly and easily that enable psychopaths to think quickly.



## **Chapter Thirty Eight**

Psychopaths are sometimes very intelligent, though there is a wide variety of intelligence among psychopaths, just as there is in the general population.

The more intelligent psychopaths are the ones who become successful (in areas such as politics, business, the arts and the professions) whereas the less intelligent psychopaths tend to have difficulty in holding onto jobs.

(Less intelligent psychopaths are not able to cope with their frustration and their anger and they often struggle to survive. They may find it difficult to understand why behaviour which seems natural to them seems to attract so much criticism. They will probably find it difficult to work with other people and their impatience and bad temper may affect their personal relationships adversely. Their aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour may result in their having to change jobs frequently and in their moving about the country a good deal.)



## Chapter Thirty Nine

Psychopaths may become extremely successful. If you don't have a conscience, and can lie easily and convincingly then you don't need talent to become rich, famous and powerful. The truth is that many psychopaths rise to the top in whatever field they choose to work. If an intelligent and ambitious psychopath works in a large organisation, the chances are good that he will eventually rise right to the top (unless, of course, there is another psychopath settled comfortably on the ladder above him). The top jobs in politics, and indeed in many other types of employment, are frequently held by people with overpowering, dominating, psychopathic traits. In our modern world, it is frequently psychopaths who rule the roost (wherever the particular roost may be).

In his book *Our Own Worst Enemy*, Norman F. Dixon wrote that: 'It would be nice to have a world devoid of psychopathic leaders. This is unlikely ever to come about. Throughout history, the possession of psychopathic traits has proved a useful passport to high office. Men and women who are unfettered by moral scruples, who are prepared to lie or cheat their way to the top, who will make promises they know they cannot keep and may, in extreme cases, think nothing of assassinating their rivals, have a huge advantage over those held back by notions of fair play. The possession of psychopathic traits is advantageous to a leader. They give him more degrees of freedom in his control and manipulating of those under him and most particularly in his dealings with potential enemies.'

And it is perfectly true that psychopaths (who are by nature selfish, uncaring and insensitive) frequently become leaders in our world; effortlessly rising to the top. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that most of the world's leaders are psychopaths.

Psychopaths are designed for success because of their superficial charm, their ruthlessness, their overriding sense of ambition, their vanity and their selfishness. The psychopath's ruthlessness is his strength and, in a world which psychopaths dominate, it is our weakness. Psychopaths are insensitive and are often overachievers. They suffer very little, if at all, from stress related disorders and are, therefore, at an enormous advantage in our stress-laden society.

Look around at modern television celebrities and sports stars and you will see that many of them are psychopaths. This is not because those who want

to be really successful in sport or on television have learnt to be ruthless, ungrateful, uncaring, dishonest and graceless. Those are surprisingly difficult traits to learn. Psychopaths rise to the top, and become successful in their chosen fields, because they have an inbuilt advantage. They do not have to learn to be ruthless. They are ruthless because they never suffer from guilt. Psychopaths, remember, do not have consciences.

Neurotics tend to be sensitive, gentle individuals who find modern living difficult. Psychopaths, on the other hand, are thick-skinned, pushy, ruthless, insensitive and tough; and intelligent psychopaths often find modern living very easy. If the world seems as though it has been designed for psychopaths, with their success in mind, this is because it, in many ways, it has been. And there is no doubt that leaders who possess psychopathic traits are at an enormous advantage. They have more freedom in their dealings with the public, with those with whom they work and with their potential enemies. They are able to control and manipulate people without any qualms. Psychopaths fake their emotions (something which they learn to do by studying other people) and so suffer very little, if at all, in circumstances which healthy people would find emotionally challenging or impossibly difficult. They can, and do, make themselves admired and likeable. It is not surprising, therefore, that many people in positions of power are psychopaths. And we should not be surprised at the fact that our society is controlled by psychopaths for, as I have already explained, psychopaths are surprisingly numerous.

Throughout history, psychopaths have always had an advantage when it comes to seeking high office, and today's political party system, with its emphasis on superficial likeability and an endless capacity for lying and deceit, actually makes it easier for psychopaths to reach the top. Our world is run by psychopaths; individuals with a dominant trait frequently associated with criminality. A remarkably high proportion of Presidents and Prime Ministers end up in prison (and many of those who escape confinement only do so because they have arranged for their country's laws to be changed or because they have bribed, bullied or killed their opponents). If the percentage of convicted criminals among solicitors or doctors was a fraction of the percentage of criminals among State leaders, there would be serious questions asked about the way in which solicitors and doctors were trained and selected.

It is not, of course, just political leaders who are psychopaths.

Many successful company directors are psychopaths. The well-known individuals who run big banking institutions, large international companies and important international organisations are frequently psychopaths. It also seems clear that most corporate bosses are psychopaths. How else is it possible to explain the fact that food company bosses allow their corporations to deliberately market and sell products which they know cause cancer and will dramatically increase the incidence of heart disease? They don't just market these products but they make a real effort to lie about the damage their products do to the health of those who consume them. You have to be a psychopath to run a company selling fat soaked burgers to children, when you know that the item you are manipulating children to demand will kill quite a number of them at an early age. How do you describe the activities of bankers who deliberately drove thousands of investors (and customers) to the brink of financial ruin (and sometimes over the edge) in order to increase their bank's profits and their own bonuses? How do you explain the fact that bankers have deliberately manipulated interest rates and the prices of commodities despite knowing that their actions must bring inevitable, lasting hardship to millions and, indeed, threaten the stability of the financial world? Could normal, sensitive individuals do such things? I doubt it. Finally, consider drug company bosses. They deliberately promote drugs which they know are lethal and useless. They sell cancer treatment drugs which they know will do more harm than good.

No decent human being with a functioning conscience could do these things. The only explanation is that the ruthless bosses, the scum that rise to the top of the corporate world, are psychopaths.

The simple truth is that people in positions of power reach the top because they don't care about people in the way that sensitive folk care. And that, inevitably, gives them an enormous advantage – a killer edge.

Politics and industry are dominated by psychopaths but so too are the professions. There are, for example, many psychopaths working in medicine and the law, and the medical and legal establishments are packed with self-serving doctors and lawyers who have lied and clawed and deceived their way to the top of their professions, and who never show remorse or regret. It can be no shock, therefore, to see how the professions have failed us; sneering at the weak and vulnerable, laughing at the kind-

hearted and regarding the honest and the genuine and the good as simply stepping stones to be used and abused.

In our world, the acquisition of power depends on what you are prepared to do to get it. And psychopaths, who are unencumbered by conscience or guilt, will do whatever it takes. So the world is full of callous liars and cheats who seem to be doing very well indeed, thank you very much, and who seem to care not one jot for the opprobrium which used to be reserved for such individuals. Remember, that although they may be extremely rich, famous and successful, these people aren't just a little bit psychopathic. On the contrary, they are full blooded, dangerous, 'lock the doors and bolt the windows' psychopaths.

As I have already pointed out, you undoubtedly know several psychopaths. You might be living with one. But there is also an excellent chance that you are working for at least one.





## **How to Decide If You're Living With a Psychopath**

Go through the items in this checklist of 39 psychopathic characteristics and behavioural patterns and count how many items on this list fit the person you know and whom you suspect of being a psychopath. The higher the number of positive associations, the greater the chances are that the person you are assessing is a psychopath.



## Afterword

There are no drugs available for the treatment of psychopaths.

Nor is psychotherapy, or any other form of treatment, likely to be helpful.

Because there is absolutely no treatment available, the diagnosis of ‘psychopath’ is rarely made by doctors. There’s not much point in making a diagnosis if there is no treatment available. And when someone is diagnosed as a psychopath it is usually only when the individual has been found guilty of a crime of violence.

The fact that most diagnosed psychopaths are in prison is one of the reasons we so easily delude ourselves into thinking that most of the psychopaths in our world are safely locked away.

Sadly, nothing could be further from the truth.

Most psychopaths have never been diagnosed. And they are certainly not in prison.

So how do ordinary, sensitive individuals protect themselves?

There’s no easy answer.

There is, I’m afraid, little point in asking your doctor, or any other authority, for help.

Any half-decent psychopath will easily laugh off any accusations and suspicions and the chances are that you (the person asking for help) will be the one who is labelled as being mentally ill – suffering from paranoia or some other psychosis.

Clearly, if you think that someone close to you could be a psychopath then you need to defend yourself – mentally, emotionally and possibly physically.

You should learn to be more suspicious and less trusting and should, perhaps, consider restarting your life away from their malign influence.

Psychopaths obtain power, and use it, because they are utterly selfish. They succeed in their toxic endeavours because the rest of us are sensitive, and we try to do more good than harm. Most of us find it difficult to believe that anyone we know could lie all the time.

But psychopaths do lie all the time.

And that’s why they have the power.

Dr Vernon Coleman MB ChB DSc FRSA is a registered medical practitioner and bestselling author. He was the first doctor to draw attention to the relationship between stress and illness and the first doctor to draw attention to the widespread problem of tranquilliser addiction. He has written widely on mental illness and about the side effects of prescription drugs. His books include *How To Stop Your Doctor Killing You*, *Doctors Kill More People Than Cancer* and *Bodypower*. He has written over 100 books which have sold more than two million hardback and paperback copies in the UK and been translated into 25 languages. Many of his books are available as eBooks. For a list of books available, please see his author page on Amazon.